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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the findings of an informal survey which examined variations from community to community in the perceptions of problems between Hawaiian-American students and the public schools. School personnel and community residents were interviewed throughout the State of Hawaii and numerous classrooms were observed. The results of this survey were then used to construct a conceptual model articulating problem clusters associated with communities varying in density of Hawaiian population and degree of urbanization. (JMB)

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The Kamehameha Early Education Program

The Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) is a research and development program of The Kamehameha Schools/Bernice P. Bishop Estate. The mission of KEEP is the development, demonstration, and dissemination of methods for improving the education of Hawaiian and Part-Hawaiian children. These activities are conducted at the Ka Na'i Pono Research and Demonstration School, and in public classrooms in cooperation with the State Department of Education. KEEP projects and activities involve many aspects of the educational process, including teacher training, curriculum development, and child motivation, language, and cognition. More detailed descriptions of KEEP's history and operations are presented in Technical Reports #1-4.

Abstract

This report was based on results of a survey conducted before The Kamehameha Early Education Project proposal was developed. School and community people were interviewed throughout the State of Hawaii. Numerous classrooms were observed as well. It was concluded that there were significant variations in the kind and degree of problems experienced by Hawaiian-American students and their teachers.

Technical Report #1

The Mutual Problems of Hawaiian-American Students and Public Schools[1]

Roland G. Tharp Ronald Gallimore

The educational problems of Hawaiian-Americans have been widely documented and discussed. The range includes the forms of academic failure, motivation problems, and personal disjunctions which plague many young Americans, particularly those with a discriminable racial and cultural heritage. Some observers have attributed the problems to personal and social deficiencies of the students; others have blamed the public schools, charging that educational programs are often incongruent with the culture of many students.

One view holds that the school problems in minority communities are the product of conflict at the cultural interface. A recent study in a suburban Hawaiian-American community concluded that there were six major points of incongruence between the values, expectations, and behavior of teachers and their Hawaiian-American students (Gallimore, Boggs, and Jordan, 1974). However, the study also suggested that many of the conflict behaviors "actually observed in the classroom often represent none of the cultural backgrounds of the participants. Conflict behaviors are invented by teacher and pupil alike and are the product of

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[1]This report is adapted from a paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Western Psychological Assn., Los Angeles, 1970. It was included in ERIC Collection, ID #ED041078, Abstract in November 1970 issue of Research in Education.

specific situations rather than the cultures of students and teachers. At the most general level, such problems are not markedly different from those that occur in any situation characterized by miscommunication and lack of mutual understanding."

It has been generally assumed that the problems of young Hawaiians are invariant from community to community. However, an informal state-wide survey suggested the assumption was overstated, at best.

The informal survey consisted of visits to schools on all the major islands and discussions with school administrators and teachers concerned with the education of Hawaiian youth. The selection of areas and individuals during the informal survey was designed to be representative, not exhaustive. The survey confirmed the general conclusions reached by Gallimore, et al.(1974): Hawaiian children do indeed have serious problems in the public schools, and the public education system has problems with them. But the survey also indicated that the kinds of difficulties, their distribution and, therefore, their potential solutions are more complex than is generally supposed.

In some communities, the educators described the Hawaiian child only as academically retarded, attributing the problem to perplexing, but not objectionable cultural values--for example, one administrator commented approvingly on the Hawaiian lifestyle in spite of the limitations it may impose for operating in the larger society. In contrast, others saw not the clash of cultures operating against the chances of academic success for Hawaiians, but rather a complex of Hawaiian "deficiencies." Improper child care and training by Hawaiian parents

were seen as resulting in inadequate and immature personalities incapable of appropriate behavior or intellectual growth. All of these alleged difficulties were presumably compounded by what one educator termed "false values".

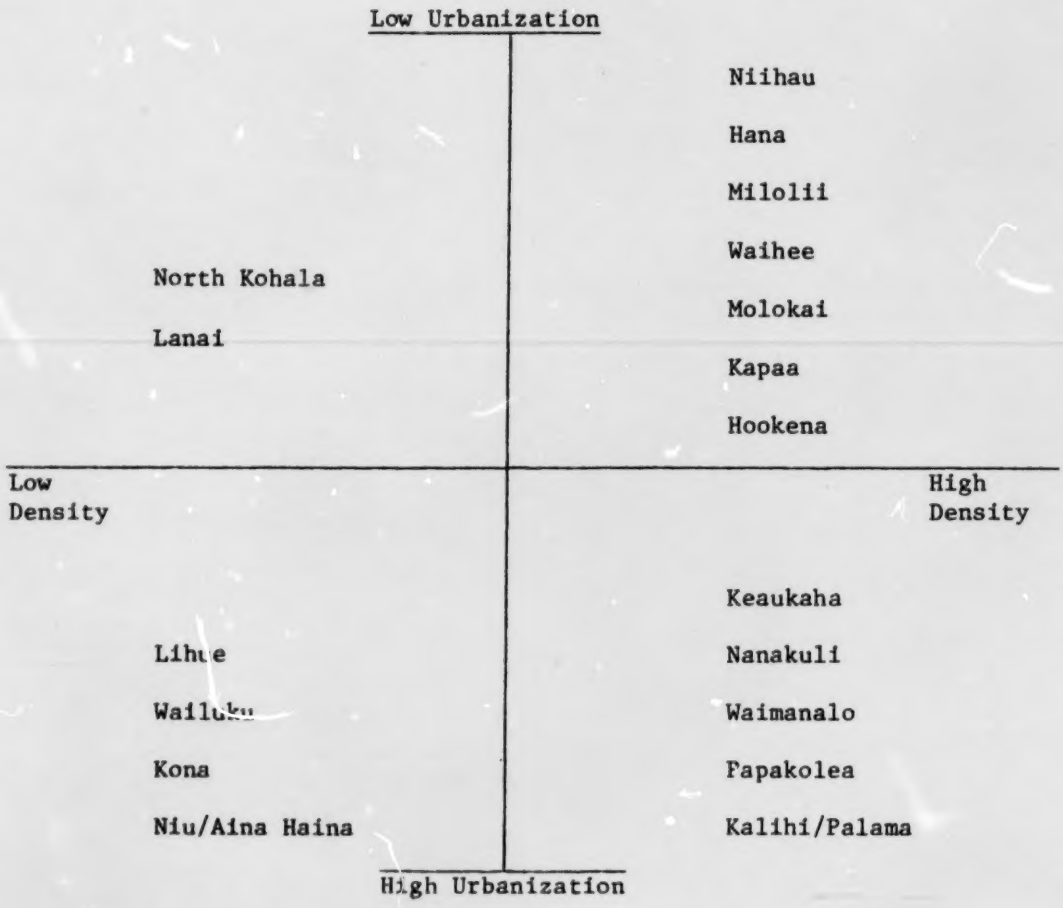
Thus, it was evident that some of the assumptions made by Gallimore, et al., during the course of concentrated work in a single Hawaiian community were invalid. In some communities, educators felt that Hawaiian youngsters had only academic problems; in other communities, in addition to academic difficulties, motivational and behavioral problems were also perceived. In summary, the distribution of the problems seemed quite varied from community to community. These variations would appear to have obvious programmatic implications; program inputs would need adjustment both in terms of the nature and severity of the problems.

We have used the results of the survey to construct a conceptual model. The principal burden of the model is articulation of the various problem clusters in an effort to clarify variation in major programmatic needs. The model consists of two dimensions: density of Hawaiian population and degree of urbanization. For presentational purposes, we will discuss the four possible combinations, each representing a hypothesized problem complex.

We mean by population density, not only the number of Hawaiians in residence, but also what can be described as their relative visibility: that is, the extent to which the Hawaiian population of a given area stands out from other groups. Degree of urbanization includes a number of factors: economic and employment characteristics (e.g., do the

parents work at jobs that are not congruent with Hawaiian values?); amount of contact with social forces hostile to Hawaiian values and style of life; exposure to implicit or explicit and uncomplimentary comparisons with other groups; geographic location vis-a-vis metropolitan/urban centers. Figure 1 presents the two dimensions and the communities which we hypothesized to fall in each of the four quadrants. The location of the communities is based on subjective judgment and is intended only as illustrative of the two dimensions.

Figure 1



For each of the four quadrants, we have predicted the following pattern of problems:

	Problem Type		
	Motivational	Academic	Social/Behavioral
High Density--High Urbanization	yes!	yes!	yes!
High Density--Low Urbanization	yes!	yes!	
Low Density--High Urbanization	yes!	yes?	
Low Density--Low Urbanization	yes(?)	yes(?)	

The distinction between motivational and academic problems may at first blush appear unusual. By way of clarification, we have used this split to reflect what educators told us. That is, in some communities, Hawaiians are reportedly capable of doing their work (no academic retardation), but are not so motivated. In order to provide a rationale for these predictions, we have summarized our survey findings for each of the four quandrants.

1. High Density--High Urbanization. Quadrant 4 is predicted to include all of the areas which have the most severe educational problems. And since urbanization is a principal defining feature of this cluster, it is not surprising that all the communities included are located in or near the two largest metropolitan areas in the State--Honolulu and Hilo. In part, the difficulties of Hawaiian youngsters in these areas are a function of visibility, both absolute and relative, but it is more than mere artifact. It is in these areas where the greatest cultural dislocation and home-community-school disjunctions appear to be present. The consequences are similar to the now familiar problems of the ghetto and the suburban enclave. Perhaps the most significant element in this situation is the gulf, and what it reflects, between the students and educators. The latter live in different areas from their

students, in a style that simultaneously imposes a harsh standard of comparison and continuing evidence of status differences. The psychological distance, in terms of values, aspirations, and expectations, makes interaction and communication difficult at best. In terms of our model, all problem elements are expected to be present in severe degree: motivational, academic, and social/behavioral.

2. High Density--Low Urbanization. Quadrant 2 includes areas which are less uniform principally because some are apparently in the early stages of urbanization, while others face the problem only in the remote future. This difference appears to alter the degree to which local educators perceive Hawaiians to be a major problem. As the community begins to change from a rural, semi-isolated state in response to changing economic conditions, the perceived disadvantages of the Hawaiian life style become a source of greater concern to educators. Where in the past the disinterest of Hawaiian pupils in academic matters represented only a failure to achieve the ideal, in the present, educators begin to see underachievement as the father of personal and social tragedy and frustration. Consequently, educators no longer regard scholastic disinterest as concommitant with a culturally-linked life style which is congenially related to a placid, rural environment; underachievement is then interpreted as rejection of society, evidence of disorder, dissolution and deficiency, all of which are attributed to the culture of the child.

Problems in Quadrant 2 conditions are expected to be perceived as primarily academic and/or motivational in nature. Forces in the community are more likely to be neutral, if not supportive in response

to program inputs, than in Quadrant 4--certainly they are unlikely to work at cross-purposes. The isolation that reduces the influence of urban forces increases the difficulties of matching need and resources. Many of the areas are geographically and/or temporally remote, yielding staff retention problems, access difficulties, long bus trips for small children, etc.

3. Low Density--High Urbanization. In general, educators interviewed in these areas made no distinctions along ethnic lines and did not regard Hawaiian life style as causally linked to academic failure. Although, with persistence, it was possible to get the educators to concede that Hawaiian youngsters are over-represented in the under-achievement-low motivation category, it is clear that they do not characteristically order their problems along ethnic lines. For example, one administrator insisted that we regard as coincidental the tendency for Hawaiian children to be in the low ability sections of his school. And even if it was for some cultural reason, which, he emphasized, it was not, it was because "we have not offered them the appropriate curriculum."

Overall, when Hawaiians are in the minority, their problems are minimized, even when they are objectively present, and their culture is positively regarded, often romanticized. It is apparently a matter of visibility. In this Quadrant, the problems are perceived, therefore, to be primarily academic.

4. Low Density--Low Urbanization. We made no visits to schools in this Quadrant. However, we predict that Hawaiian children in these areas will be principally viewed as a minor problem, involving primarily

motivational issues.

Summary and Conclusions

The diversity with which the nature and genesis of Hawaiian education problems are perceived weighs against single explanations and solutions. Results of our informal survey of educators in Hawaii suggest that factors in addition to the specific and particular qualities of Hawaiian children are involved; for example, the attributional biases of educators and community residents, population and geographic factors, community expectations, and the like.

To separate and understand the complexities naturally requires additional information. More important, perhaps, the results suggest that a mechanism is needed that can address differing educational problems in diverse communities. What might work well in urban Honolulu might not be needed or appreciated in rural Maui. Thus, an attack on the educational problems of the Hawaiian minority requires not only experimentation, but flexibility in approach. In addition, the rapidly changing nature of Hawaii's communities and public schools necessitates that any research and development program must be organized for continual change and adjustment as new issues and needs arise. Most importantly, the program must be guided by data-based continuous evaluation.

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